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ON THE RIGHT by William F. Buckley Jr.
 TO LOOK AFTER OUR INTELLIGENCE

For many years after the late Sen. Frank Church, with the cooperation of former CIA Director William Colby, made a foreign aid program out of American secrets, it was an open scandal that intelligence agencies in Great Britain and France simply declined to cooperate with the United States in important matters.

Why? Because they did not wish to risk their own assets by letting the CIA, whose secret information post-Church was available to as many as 36 U.S. legislators, have knowledge of them.

In such situations one can never know how much damage resulted: The intelligence trade is that way. What did not happen (the airplane that didn't blow up because the terrorist was secretly foiled) does not make the headlines. By the same token, it is not obvious how many Americans, or American allies, were blackmailed, maimed or killed by communist agents or terrorists who were not foiled because vital information leaked to them.

One day there will be a definitive history of allied intelligence operations in the postwar era. This may be possible if the Soviet Union gets itself a Freedom of Information Act. We may find, for instance, what has been publicly charged by responsible analysts in Great Britain that the top MI-6 agent in charge of detecting communist subversion in Great Britain was himself a communist agent.

Recent posthumous revelations by Nikita Khrushchev confirm the damage done by Alger Hiss and his successors. The one clear beneficiary of these revelations will be Sen. Joe McCarthy, though in some respects his reputation will diminish. It never crossed his mind, when he railed about institutional disloyalty, how bad it really was.

Now we have Speaker Tom Foley setting up the new slate in the House Intelligence Committee, which is supposed to recommend appropriate intelligence policy, and to pass on covert operations, in certain circumstances. The slate designated for membership to six-year terms on the House committee includes two or three leftist ideologues. But first among these is Rep. Ron Dellums of California. His appointment is the equivalent of naming former Rep. Vito Marcantonio of New York, back in 1948, to a legislative committee to organize anti-communist operations.

Dellums has in almost every situation taken the anti-anti-communist position. If our military had depended only on Dellums' votes, we would be fighting in the Persian Gulf with biplanes and Gatling guns.

Here is a measure of Dellums' sympathies. After the invasion of Grenada in 1983, correspondence lifted from the headquarters of the communist overlord Maurice Bishop was inspected. And a letter turned up the publication of which would have resulted in Dellums being chased out of the constituency he represents with wet towels, except that he represents the People's Republic of Berkeley.

The most spectacular letter was written by Dellums' aide and confidante Carlotta Scott directly to strongman Bishop, and it was all about her boss.

"My Dearest," the letter from an aide of an American legislator

CONTINUED

Page 38.

2.

addressed to a communist agent began, ``Ron, as a political thinker, is the best around and Fidel will verify that in no uncertain terms.'' Wonderful: If you doubt we're on your side, ask Fidel Castro and he will reassure you.

When matched against the best of them, Ron always comes out ahead (even with Fidel). ... Ron is really hooked on you and Grenada'' -- i.e., the attempted communization of Grenada -- ``and doesn't want anything to happen to building the revolution and making it strong. He really admires you as a person and even more so as a leader with courage and foresight, principle and integrity. Believe me, he doesn't make that kind of statement often about anyone.'' Indeed. He probably wouldn't make it about George Washington. ``The only other person that I know of that he expresses such admiration for is Fidel.''

Now my first temptation on reading this letter eight years ago was to imagine that it was a plant by Carlottia who had been spurned by Ron, or whatever. But the weeks and months went by and there was no serious disavowal of it. So we see that the situation today calls for a man who admires Fidel Castro more than anyone in public life to survey American secrets, and cast his vote to authorize or not American secret intelligence operations, which deal in such matters as whether this war is likely to break out, that nation is accumulating nuclear power, or that airplane is likely to blow up in the air.

Some years ago, Rep. Michael Harrington, sitting in the same committee, leaked a vital secret to The New York Times and The Washington Post. He explained that it didn't matter that it was secret, he thought the people had a right to know. Dellums may not believe the people have a right to know, but one gathers he believes Fidel Castro has a right to know.

39.